Advisory Committee was too big in size, and it was difficult for all to attend frequent meetings. The Empowered Committee is much smaller in size, and it is expected that it will be able to meet frequently....

SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE: Has it met even once after it was constituted in 1988?

SHRI NAVEEN PATNAIK: If you will allow me to reply,... (*Interruptions*)

SHRI T.N. CHATURVEDI: The new Committee is functionally more effective now.

SHRI NAVEEN PATNAIK: Sir, in reply to the second part of the hon. Member's question, the expenditure incurred for Research and Development for the Department of Steel, Ministry of Steel and Mines, is met from the Steel Development Fund. The amount of grant or loan made available from the Steel Development Fund for Research and Development in the field of steel during the last four years is as follows. In 1995-96, it was Rs. 50 lakhs; in 1996-97, it was nil; in 1997-98, it was Rs. 4 lakhs, and in 1998-99, up to the 31st of December, 1998, it was Rs. 32 lakhs. In the field of Science and Technology, the amount spent in 1995-96 was nil; in 1996-97, it was about Rs. 19 lakhs; in 1997-98, it was around Rs. 15 lakhs, and in 1998-99, up to the 31st of December of 1988, it was around Rs. 90 lakhs.

DR. RAJA RAMANNA: The Minister has said that this Science Advisory Committee had a very large number of members. I would like to draw the Minister's attention to the fact that the Science Advisory Committee to the Cabinet had sent a note to the Cabinet saying that no semi-technical committee should have more than seven people. Now, I repeat this because it was decided by the first Science Advisory Committee of the Cabinet Several years ago as to how many members there should be on committees which have to implement decisions. From the statement, I note that Science Advisory Committee of the Steel industry had 22 members and it has been reduced to 10, 14. I find that the terms of reference are so broad that no effective decision can be taken unless this is broken up into further details. Of course, many people can be consulted. But, with 14 people, all busy Secretaries to Government, and various officials, examining all aspects of science and technology, co-ordinating all on going research, is quite an impossibility. The Minister should perhaps try to revise the terms of reference that is given here. This is my suggestion.

SHRI NAVEEN PATNAIK: Sir, I will, certainly, consider the suggestions of the hon. Member.

राजस्थान और महाराष्ट्र में छुआछूत

*263. **श्री जनेश्वर मिश्र: क्या सामाजिक न्याय और अधिकारिता** मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि:

(क) क्या यह सच है कि हमारे देश के अधिकांश हिस्सों में, विशेषकर राजस्थान और महाराष्ट्र में अब भी छूआछूत विद्यमान है;

(ख) यदि हां, तो क्या आज भी देश के कई हिस्सों में छोटी जातियों के लोगों को ढंग से बारात तक नहीं ले जाने देते है और ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में चाय-पान की दुकानों में उनके लिए अलग वर्तन रखे जाते है, और

(ग) यदि हां, तो सरकार इस घिनौनी प्रथा को समाप्त करने हेतु क्या कदम उठा रही है?

सामाजिक न्याय और अधिकारिता मंत्रालय की राज्य मंत्री (श्रीमती मेनका गांधी): (क) जी, नहीं। राज्य सरकारों तथा संघ राज्य क्षेत्रों से उपलब्ध सूचना के अनुसार, वर्ष 1996 और 1997 के दौरान राजस्थान के छुट-पुट मामलों को छोड़कर देश के अधिकांश क्षेत्रों में छूआछूत विद्यमान नहीं है।

(ख) राजस्थान राज्य को छोड़कर अन्य किसी राज्य सरकार / संघ क्षेत्र प्रशासन ने ऐसे किसी दृष्टांत के बारे में सूचित नहीं किया है।

(ग) संविधान के अनुच्छेद 17 के अंतर्गत अस्पृश्यता वर्जित है। सिविल अधिकार संरक्षण अधिनियम, 1955 में पर्याप्त कानूनी सहायता, अभियोजन संबंधी कार्रवाई शुरू करने अथवा पर्यवेक्षण करने

के लिए अधिकारियों की नियुक्ति, अस्पृश्यता से संबंधित मामलों की न्यायिक जांच करने के लिए विशेष न्यायालयों की स्थापना करने, समय-समय पर सर्वेक्षण करने तथा अस्पृश्यता-प्रवण क्षेत्रों की पहचान करने की व्यवस्था है।

वर्ष 1997-98 के दौरान सिविल अधिकार संरक्षण अधिनियम, 1955 तथा अनुसूचित जाति और अनुसूचित जनजाति (अत्याचार निवारण) अधिनियम, 1989 का कार्यान्वयन करने के लिए 16.47 करोड़ रुपए व्यय किए गए।

श्री जनेश्वर मिश्र: सभापति महोदय, मैं यह जानकर के सवाल पूछ रहा था क्यों की अस्पृश्यता के बारे में हम लोग प्रश्न पहर में कोई निश्चित हल नहीं निकाल पाएंगे। लेकिन सरकार ने जो जवाब दिया है उसका पहला हिस्सा पढ़ने के बाद तो मैं और निराश हुआ हूं। इस पर विशेष चर्चा होनी चाहिए। सरकार कहती है कि राज्य सरकारों से जो रिपोर्ट आई है उसमें देश में कहीं भी छूआछूत नहीं है। यह परिस्थिति आंख-मूंदने की स्थिति कहलाएगी। केवल राजस्थान से कुछ घटनाओं के बारे में इनको जानकारी मिली है, इसके अलावा नहीं मिली है। मैं मंत्री जी को जानता हूं, वह जीव-जंतुओं के जीवन की रक्षा के लिए हमेशा प्रयत्नशील रहती हैं और यहां आदमी पूरे देश में घृणा का पात्र बन रहा है। सरकार के अलावा और भी एजेंसियां होती हैं। 'हिन्दू' अखबार में एक खबर छपी है और लगातार छप रही है प्रसांई नाथ की कि देशभर में किस तरह से छुआछूत अब भी विद्यमान है। एक सीरियल 'उल्लंघन' आ रहा है। उसमें कर्णाटक की छुआछूत के बारे में लम्बी चर्चा है। चूंकि राज्य सरकारों से ही केन्द्रीय सरकार यह रिपोर्ट लेती है इसलिए मैं कहना चाहता हूं कि थोड़ा आंख-खोलकर देखना होगा। क्या इनके सचिव, क्या इनके विभाग के लोग 'उल्लंघन' सीरियल देखते हैं? 'हिन्दू' अखबार में जो मासिक लेख प्रीसांई नाथ का छप रहा है क्या उसको पढ़ते हैं? और अगर वे इसको नहीं पढ़ते हैं तो यह दुर्भाग्य की बात है। दो साल पहले एक हरिजन सिपाही पानी में डूबते हुए बच्चे को बचाने के लिए महाराष्ट्र के एक मंदिर में छिपने गया तो उसकी पत्थर मार-मार कर लोगों ने जाने ले ली। यह रिपोर्ट राज्य सरकार नहीं देती है। यह अखबार में छपी खबर है। मैं मंत्री जी से यह पूछना चाहूंगा कि क्या आपके पास कोई अपनी एजेंसी है जो देशभर में छूआछूत को रोकने के लिए या जानकारी हासिल करने के लिए उसका इस्तेमाल कर सकते हों? और अगर नहीं है तो क्या आपका विचार उसका गठन करने का है?

SHRIMATI MANEKA GANDHI: Sir, I agree with the hon. Member that, in fact, we do close our eyes to something that is being practised in so many States. But, unfortunately, I do not have an agency that can check from the States. We put it into the hands of the State, and we can only respond and keep an eye on cases which are registered by SHOs, and if they report that subject. Now, unfortunately, they have a lot of cases registered over so many years under the Prevention of Atrocities to SCs and STs Act. However, under this particular untouchability part of the act, there have been only five cases registered, and these are specific to Rajasthan. Now, it really depends on the States. I have been repeatedly writing to the States to let us know about such cases. We have declared 89 districts in India which are prone to having atrocities on the SCs and STs. We have established special courts for them. We constantly monitor what the special courts are doing. We have constantly monitor what the special courts are doing. We have asked the Chief Ministers to establish more special courts. We have even asked for mobile courts. Now, it is up to the States to put it. I can only give money for such a thing. However, about having a monitoring agency, for instance, I am giving you an example. We have a monitoring agency for monitoring scavengers. We have the Commission. Even they don't come back with any particular figures that warrant some kind of specific attention because that is illegal. This is also illegal. How do they go out and ask the District Magistrate for something? I have just received a reply from a District Magistrate on something I had asked him, saying, 'no' on the subject of sacrific which was illegally done. He wrote back to me saying, "No report has been filed. Therefore, I cannot give you an answer." These are the kind of responses that we get. Since no report has been filed by the SHOs on acts of untouchability, there is nothing we can do about it. It is really a matter of sensitising the police or spreading awareness to the extent that people are brave enough to register these cases.

श्री जनेश्वर मिश्र: सभापति जी, मंत्री जी ने जो जवाब दिया है वह निराशा का जवाब है कि केन्द्र सरकार के पास कोई भी इस तरह की एजेन्सी नहीं है। यह किसी राज्य सरकार का सवाल नहीं है, यह देशव्यापी सवाल है। सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने इंदिरा साहनी वाले मामले में तमिलनाडु के एक पर्दा-वानर-जाति के बारे में जिक्र किया है और कहा है कि उस जाति के लोगों को दिन में निकलने की इजाजत नहीं है। यह सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने कहा है कि राज्य सरकारें इसके बारे में चर्चा न करें। यह जाति दिन में न निकला करे और रात को गंदे कपड़े वगैरह इकट्ठे करने का धन्धा करे। यह सही है कि उस जाति के लोगों की आदत ऐसी हो गई होगी। उनकी आदत को सुधारना केन्द्र सरकार की जिम्मेदारी है। हरिजनों और दलितों में बहुत सी ऐसी आदतें होंगी जिनको सुधाने की जिम्मेवारी केन्द्र सरकार की होती है। यदि यह जिम्मेवारी केन्द्र सरकार नहीं लेती है अपनी एजेन्सी के मार्फत तो यह शर्मनाक बात होगी। मैं पिछले दिनों हरिद्वार में गया था। हरिद्वार में जब मैं डुबकी लगाने लगा तो वहां के पण्डे ने कहा कि हिन्दू के अलावा हर की पौड़ी पर कोई डुबकी नहीं लगा सकता। गंगा नदी हिन्दू और मुसलमान नहीं देखा करती, ईसाई नहीं देखा करती। यह राज्य सरकारें रिपोर्ट न भी करें तो क्या केन्द्र सरकार की यह जिम्मेवारी नहीं बनती इस तरफ के नियम को परिवर्तित करने के लिए कोई प्रयास करें? ये दो इंस्टांसेज मैं जानबूझकर दे रहा हूं। एक तमिलनाडु की पर्दा वानर जाति जो दिन में नहीं निकलती है। यह सुप्रीम कोर्ट के जज ने कहा है, मैं नहीं कह रहा हूं। दूसरे, हरिद्वार में हर की पौड़ी जहां हिन्दू के अलावा कोई स्नान नहीं कर सकता, यह नियम है। अगर यह नियम है तो यह नियम बदलना चाहिए और तमिलनाडु में अगर पर्दा वानर जाति के लोगों को दिन में निकलने की इजाजत नहीं है तो उनकी सुरक्षा और दिन में निकलने के लिए क्या प्रयास किये जा रहे हैं?

WELCOME TO PARLIAMENTARY DELEGATION FROM VIETNAM

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. Members, I have an announcement to make. We have with us, seated in the Special Box, Members of a Parliamentary delegation from Vietnam, currently on a visit to our country under the distinguished leadership of His Excellency Dr. (Prof.) Vu Dinh Cu, Vice-Chairman of the National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Victnam.

On behalf of the Members of the House and on my own behalf, I take pleasure in extending a hearty welcome to the leader and other members of the delegation and wish our distinguished guests an enjoyable and fruitful stay in our country. We hope that during their stay here they would be able to see and learn more about our parliamentary system, our country and our people, and their visit to this country will further strengthen the friendly bonds that exist between India and Vietnam. Through them we convey our greetings and best wishes to the Parliament and the friendly people of Vietnam.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS —Contd.

(Questions No. 263-*Contd.*)

SHRIMATI MANEKA GANDHI: In response to that part of the question, I would say that we have the SC and ST Commission. I will personally ask it to go into the issue of untouchability and for taking up specific cases which even if they hear about. I am not to rely just on the reports from the states but I will also take into consideration the areas where it is still being practised. To come back to the TV serial, I do not know if Ullanghan is actually meant as much to show cases as much as it is to sensitise people to the illegality of such cases.

PROF. (SHRIMATI) BHARATI RAY: Sir, I find that the answer given by the hon. Minister is very unsatisfactory and disappointing indeed. We all know that untouchability has its roots in history. We all know that this custom was designed by a very clever group of people to perpetuate their dominance over others. The hon. Minister has referred to the protection of Civil Rights Act which in my humble view is the only Act which is more farcical than the Dowry prohibition Act because nobody is interested in the enforcement of this law. That is a reality. Therefore, my specific question, apart from that is what steps is the

Government considering to take to demolish the myth that one group for people is inferioring with the another group of people?

SHRIMATI MANEKA GANDHI: It is difficult for me to change at such a philosophical level the attitudes that have been ingrained for thousands of years. However let me answer, as far as I can. One thing is that the Dowry Prohibition Act is a very good Act and it is working. It has thrown a fear of God into a lot of men. The second thing is it is working so is the Protection of Civil Rights Act. I would tell you the number of cases so that you can understand how it is working. In 1997, as per figures available, there were 798 cases which we registered; 522 have been challaned. The court disposed of 1137 cases in 1996 and 556 cases in 1997. As far as conviction is concerned, 54 people were convicted in 1996 and 44 people were convicted in 1997. Now the number of courts has also gone up and the seriousness with which they are taking up these cases is also increasing. It really depends on what the SHO at village level does and how much courage the villager has for registering a case. She said that the Act is not adequate, That I think, perhaps would be an overstatement. What I am doing is as I said before, I will ask the Chairman of the SC and ST Commission to go into this serious thing and give us proposals. There was a proposal two years ago by the Deve Gowda Government to amend the Protection of Civil Rights Act. There was an attempt to deal with that. However, each and every state protested against it and they did not want to amend it. So, we will try to do it through the Commission. Let us see if we are successful in this.

DR. M.N. DAS: Sir, I would like to congratulate the hon. Minister for presenting at least a note of hope to the House that untouchability or atrocities in respect of untouchables is no longer present or visible in India. She has given a clean chit to almost all the States except the state of Rajasthan. She has referred to the incidents of caste atrocities in Rajasthan. She has mentioned the year 1996-97. Would she give a guarantee or clarification that in the year 1998-99 no caste atrocities have taken place in Rajasthan.

SMT. MANEKA GANDHI: This is a specific question. I cannot give you a gurantee that is has not taken place. I can only say that it has not been reported to my Ministry.

You and I know that it happens everyday. And, it just does not happen at a major level, for instance, in Rajasthan, with wedding or with funeral or with bathing in the Ganga. It happens in people's houses, it happens in the way that you treat your *safai karmacharis* and it happens in the way that you treat people that you personally have been brought up to believe a lower than what they are. It happens in everyday life. For me to say, "No. It never happened either in Rajasthan or in any where", would be wrong. Would it not be?

श्री ओंकार सिंह लखावत: सभापति महोदय, माननीया मंत्री महोदया ने अपने उत्तर में यह कहा है कि अनुसूचित जाति के लोगों पर होने वाले अत्याचारों से संबंधित मुकदमों के निस्तारण के लिए स्पेशल कोर्ट बने हैं। 1997-98 में लगभग 16.47 करोड़ रुपये भारत सरकार ने खर्च किये। मैं जानना चाहता हूं कि अनुसूचित जाति और अनुसूचित जनजाति पर अत्याचारों से संबंधित जितने न्यायालय है उनमें मुकदमों के निस्तारण के लिए जो बात केन्द्रीय सरकार ने कही है, उसमें स्थिति यह है कि वे न्यायालय एस०सी०/एस०टी० से संबंधित मुकदमों का निस्तारण तो 25 प्रतिशत करते हैं बल्कि राज्य सरकारों ने वहां के अन्य न्यायालयों के दूसरे क्रिमिनल केसेज़ ट्रायल करने के लिए दे दिये हैं। इसलिए एस०सी०/एस०टी० को जो त्वरित न्याय मिलना चाहिये, केसेज़ का अर्ली डिस्पोज़ल होना चाहिये, वह नहीं हो रहा है। यह न्यायालय एस०सी०, एस०टी० को न्याय दिलाने के लिए भारत सरकार की मद से कायम किये गये है, उनमें केवल एस०सी०/एस०टी० से संबंधित केसेज़ की ट्रायल की व्यवस्था करेंगे ताकि उनको न्याय मिल सके, यह मैं जानना चाहता हूं?

SMT. MANEKA GNADHI: Sir, only six states have established special courts, which are exclusive, under the Prevention of Atrochities Act. The other states, unfortunately, have complained about the expenditure involved and have doubled the Magistrate's normal duties under this Act. In that case, the number of cases is less. All eighty-nine districts, which we have earmarked, where we know that atrocities take place, have got special courts.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Let us go to the next Question.

SHRI B.P. SINGHAL: Sir, I have a point to make.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No. I have the names of twenty Members. I have twenty names. If they want to have a separate discussion on this, they can have. Already we took seventeen minutes on this question.

SHRI B.P. SINGHAL: Sir, I have one very important question relating to this.

SHRI E. BALANANDAN: We can have a separate discussion on this.

MR. CHAIRMAN: not, now. Question Number 264.

Impact of Freight Hike on Steel Industry

*264 SHRI RAJNATH SINGH 'SURYA' Will the Minister of STEEL AND MINES be pleased to state:

(a) the impact of recent freight hike by Railways on steel industry;

(b) Would it increase the price of steel; and

(c) if so, by what percentage?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI NAVEEN PATNAIK): (a) to (c) A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) The impact of recent freight hike by Railways on the public sector undertaking under the Department of Steel alone would be approximately Rs. 110 crores.

(b) and (c) The prices of steel are affected by several factors including input costs, domestic demand, landed cost of imports, railway freight, export market and the cost of labour etc. Any increase in the raiway freight will enhance the cost of production of steel. However, the exact increase in price of steel due to hike in railway freight cannot be predicted. It will be governed by the demand and supply equilibrium, price elasticity of the relevant segments of the steel materials and capacity of the market to absorb the same.

श्री राजनाथ सिंह सूर्यः सभापति जी, माननीय मंत्री जी ने अपने उत्तर में कहा है कि रेलवे द्वारा माल भाड़ा ढोने की दर में जो वृद्धि की गई है उससे "अकेले" शब्द पर ज़ोर दिया गया है, इस्पात विभाग के नियंत्रणाधनी सरकारी क्षेत्र के उपक्रमों पर लगभग 110 करोड़ रुपये का प्रभाव पड़ेगा। बाद में उन्होंने कहा है कि इसका कोई मूल्यांकन संभव नहीं है। जिस तरह से बाज़ार की स्थिति होगी, उसके अनुसार प्रभाव पड़ेगा। भारत सरकार ने निर्णय किया है कि इस वर्ष वह अधिक से अधिक घरों का निर्माण, सड़कों का निर्माण करेगी। इस प्रकार से कंस्ट्रक्शन वर्क बहुत अधिक लिया जाएगा। मैं माननीय मंत्री जी से यह जानना चाहता हूं कि यह जो मूल्य वृद्धि है क्या उस योजना को प्रभावित करेगी अथवा नहीं और यदि करेगी तो उस योजना को प्रभावित न कर सके, इस दृष्टि से कोई उपाय करने का भी विचार किया गया है?

SHRI NAVEEN PATNAIK: Sir, it will not be possible to pass Rs. 110 crores, which, after the Railway Budget, is what is going to be the burden on the steel sector. In today's market, the SAIL, for instance, will not be able to realise this from the consumer. So. it cannot be realised from the consumer. This burden will, mainly have to be shouldered by the producer and the SAIL is the major part of it.

Sir, what we would like from the Railway Ministry, for the steel sector, is a review of the freight rates for steel materials. Sir, steel is presently classified as very high tariff class of 210 tonnes for train-load class and 230 tonnes for wagon-load class. This may be changed from